DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 081 567 RC 007 279

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TITLE The Church and Prejudice: An Examination of White Clergymen's Attitudes Towards Blacks in the Deep South.
PUB DATE Aug 73
NOTE 20p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Rural Sociological Society, College Park, Maryland, August 1973

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS Age; Caucasians; Civil Rights; *Clergymen; *Negroes; Religious Education; *Residential Patterns; *Rural Urban Differences; *Social Discrimination
IDENTIFIERS *South

ABSTRACT

Methodist ministers in a Deep South State were compared by rural-urban residence for prejudicial attitudes towards Blacks. Previous findings indicated that area of residence was a factor in determining civil rights attitudes. Therefore, it was expected that ministers serving southern rural congregations were more prejudiced than their urban counterparts. In addition, other factors such as age, level of education (seminary-nonseminary training), and religious fundamentalism were assessed as variables. Data were collected by questionnaires employing fixed alternative response items. The sample consisted of 118 white, male ministers attending the Mississippi Methodist Annual Conference in 1969. Scaleogram analysis was used to construct 6-item indexes measuring prejudice and religious fundamentalism. These and the remaining independent variables (residence, age, and education) were dichotomized. The analysis revealed that the best predictor of prejudice was education, followed by fundamentalism, residence, and age. Suggestions for further research were offered. (Author/KM)

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THE CHURCH AND PREJUDICE: AN EXAMINATION OF WHITE CLERGYMEN'S ATTITUDES TOWARDS BLACKS IN THE DEEP SOUTH

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College Park, Maryland, August, 1973

Not for Quotation or Publication

AC007279

30 October 1973
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ABSTRACT

Methodist ministers in a deep South state are compared by rural-urban residence in reference to prejudicial attitudes toward Blacks. Previous findings in the literature indicate that area of residence is a factor in determining attitudes toward civil rights. Therefore, it is expected that ministers serving rural congregations in a deep South state are more prejudiced toward Blacks than their urban counterparts. In addition, other factors such as age, level of education (seminary-nonseminary training), and religious fundamentalism are assessed as variables determining prejudicial attitudes of ministers.

The data were collected by questionnaires employing fixed alternative response items. The sample consists of 118 white, male ministers attending the Mississippi Methodist Annual Conference in the summer of 1969.

Scalogram analysis is used to construct two six-item indexes measuring (1) prejudice toward Blacks, and (2) religious fundamentalism. These and the remaining independent variables (i.e., residence, age, and education) are dichotomized for the analysis.

Our analysis, employing chi square and gamma (Yule's Q for 2 X 2 tables), reveals that the best predictor of prejudice is education (seminary vs. non-seminary), followed by fundamentalism (high vs. low), which is followed in order by residence (rural vs. urban) and age (young vs. old).

Suggestions for further research into the area of ministerial education and its impact upon the minister's relationship to his parishioners are offered.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is an examination of clergymen's attitudes toward Blacks in the deep South. More specifically, the paper is concerned with the relationship between prejudice and four independent variables: area of residence, age, education and fundamentalism. The data were collected from a sample of Methodist ministers attending an annual conference in southern Mississippi.

In recent years sociologists interested in the study of religion have focused their attention upon the church's role in regard to racial equality and civil rights (Glock and Ringer, 1956; Campbell and Pettigrew, 1959; Brewer, 1965; Lenski, 1963; Lee and Marty, 1964; Glock and Stark, 1965; Berton, 1965; Wood and Zald, 1966; Hadden, 1969, 1971; and Nelsen and Yokley, 1970). Most of these studies are concerned with the processes through which the churches assert themselves on questions of social issues and the potential conflicts which may develop between the laity and clergy. In addition, some of the studies have been concerned with the attitudes of the clergy towards civil rights and related issues of racial equality.

Nelsen and Yokley (1970:171), for example, in a study of civil rights attitudes of rural and urban Presbyterians conclude that since civil rights is an important aspect of contemporary sociological research, further investigations on the differences by area of residence is needed. In addition, they are of the opinion that "such studies should also go beyond differences by area of residence to identification and exploration of the attitudes and values in which differences are greatest." Also, Hadden and Rymph (1966) indicate that a major factor in clergymen's positions on race is the demographic area in which the minister's church is located.

They found that churches located in non-metropolitan areas are considerably more conservative on racial issues than are metropolitan congregations. Similarly, Lenski (1963:163) states that "the centers of civil rights conservatism" are located in the rural areas, and in particular the rural areas of the South. Glock and Stark (1966) in a study of anti-Semitism support the findings of Lenski in that they show prejudice to be more prevalent in rural areas than in urban areas. Nelson and Yokley (1970:166) in an analysis of a nationwide study of Presbyterian ministers and elders also found that "rural dwellers were less likely to score at the liberal end of the civil rights scale than were urban respondents."

Other studies indicate that in addition to residence, factors such as age, education, and religious ideology are associated with prejudicial attitudes. Selznick and Steinberg (1969) in a nationwide study of white Americans' attitudes toward Blacks found that there was a positive relationship between age and prejudice. Also, Nelsen and Yokley (1970) found that younger ministers tended to score higher on a civil rights scale than did older ministers.

The literature on education and prejudice generally reflects the idea that the higher the educational level the less likely one is to hold prejudicial attitudes. Particularly relevant for this study is the finding of Jones (1969:76) that "when a white southerner goes to college, the reduction in anti-Black attitudes is sizeable . . . ." Also, since the nature of theological training has been changing over the past several decades to include a historical and systematic criticism of the Bible as well as courses on social ethics and the role of the churches on social issues, it is assumed that many of the younger clergy who are seminary-

trained will hold more liberal ideas on social issues and will be less prejudiced toward Blacks. Birdston and Culver (1965) alluded to this idea when they found that the young ministers in seminary schools were more committed to social involvement than were older ministers.

Religious ideology has also been shown to be correlated with prejudicial attitudes. (Although religious ideology can be discussed from a number of perspectives--i.e., orthodoxy vs. neo-orthodoxy, conservatism vs. liberalism, fundamentalism vs. secularism--our paper is only concerned with fundamentalism). Hadden (1968:682-683), for example, has shown that theologically conservative ministers express greater prejudicial sentiments than ministers who are theologically liberal. Glock and Stark (1965) also indicate that a traditional theology (which we are assuming to be similar to fundamentalism) is positively associated with prejudicial attitudes. Feagin (1965:5) found that the hypothesis "there will not be a meaningful correlation between anti-Negro prejudice and fundamentalism" did not hold and that actually the more fundamentalistic a person was the more prejudiced he was. Actually, the very characteristics of fundamentalism might lead one to expect a relationship such as found by Feagin. Jackson (1961:32) has stated that in fundamentalism there is involved a "pessimistic view of man," and Broen (1957:178) states that persons with high positive loadings of fundamentalism will, among other things, "see man as essentially sinful, and emphasize his need for, and rightful fear of, a punishing God." There seems to be, then, some correspondence between these characteristics and those characteristics which make for anti-Black attitudes.

HYPOTHESES AND DATA

Based on previous literature we expected to find (1) that urban ministers would score lower on the prejudice scale than would rural ministers, (2) that younger ministers would score lower on the prejudice scale than would the older ministers, (3) that those ministers with seminary training would score lower on the prejudice scale than those without seminary training, and (4) that those ministers who score low on the fundamentalism scale would score low on the prejudice scale.

The items included in the two scales, as well as the other variables, were included in a self-report questionnaire employing fixed alternative response items. The questionnaire was administered to 232 white, male ministers attending the Mississippi Methodist Annual Conference in the summer of 1969. Of those 232, 118 ministers returned completed questionnaires, giving a 51 percent return. Therefore, we believe that the responses to the survey reported here can be seen as representative.

The two scales utilized in this research are six item Guttman scales. The six items making up the prejudice scale ordered from least to most difficult are: (1) Apart from skin color, there are no differences between Blacks and whites; (2) What do you think about integrated public school classrooms?; (3) Negroes should be granted greater political power; (4) Negroes should be satisfied with separate but equal treatment in housing, education, and jobs; (5) Negroes are pushing too hard for equal rights; (6) Black militants are justified in seeking reparations from the churches. Fixed alternative responses for the scale item are: (1) Fully agree, (2) Partly agree, (3) Undecided, (4) Partly disagree, (5) Fully disagree, except for Item 1

which has a dichotomous response of Agree or Disagree. Since a Guttman scale requires that the responses be dichotomized, this presents no problem. Thus, the Agree category of Item 1, in essence, contains the Fully agree and Partly agree categories of the other five items. The following statistics were obtained from the Guttman scale of racial prejudice: (1) coefficient of reproductibility(.91), (2) minimum marginal reproductibility (.75), (3) percent improvement (.16), (4) coefficient of scalability (.64), (5) Spearman-Brown test of reliability (.92). Scale scores were assigned to each respondent and were then dichotomized into low and high prejudice.

The fundamentalism scale consisting of six items ordered from least to most difficult are: (1) There is life beyond death; (2) Here are four statements about the Bible: indicate which is closest to your own view; (3) What do you think about drinking? Is it:; (4) Jesus was born of a virgin; (5) The devil actually exists; (6) Sex crimes, such as rape and attacks on children, deserve more than mere imprisonment; such criminals ought to be publicly whipped or worse. Since the responses for these six items are quite varied, they are presented here in complete form. Item 1 has the following response categories: (1) Fully agree, (2) Partly agree, (3) Undecided, (4) Partly disagree, (5) Fully disagree. Item 2 has these responses: (1) The Bible is God's word and all it says is true, (2) The Bible was written by men who were inspired by God and its basic moral and religious teachings are true, but because the writers were men it contains some human errors, (3) The Bible is a valuable book, but because it was written by wise men who lived so long ago that it has little value for today. Item 3's response categories are: (1) Always wrong, (2) Sometimes wrong, (3) Never wrong. Items 4 and 5 have the following categories: (1)

Completely true, (2) Probably true, (3) Probably not true, (4) Definitely not true. Item 6 is dichotomized into: (1) Agree, (2) Disagree. The following statistics were obtained from the Guttman scale of fundamentalism: (1) coefficient of reproductibility (.98), (2) minimum marginal reproductibility (.88), (3) percent improvement (.10), (4) coefficient of scalability (.82), (5) Spearman-Brown test of reliability (.89). Scale scores were calculated for each respondent and were then dichotomized into low and high fundamentalism.

The independent variable, age of respondent, was collapsed into (1) less than 40, and (2) greater than or equal to 40. Professional education, another independent variable, was collapsed into (1) less than a seminary degree, and (2) a seminary degree. Residence is collapsed into (1) less than 2,500 and (2) greater than, or equal to 2,500. This is the basic accepted division between rural and urban.

THE FINDINGS

Table 1 indicates the relationship between residence (coded rural and urban) and prejudice (coded low and high). Chi square was used to test significance of difference, and gamma (Yule's Q for 2 X 2 tables) was used as a measure of association throughout this analysis. As can be observed from Table 1, residence is positively related to prejudice (.30). An examination of the percentages indicates that there are more low prejudice respondents (51 percent from urban as opposed to 36 percent for the rural areas). More rural residents tend to exhibit high prejudice (sixty-four percent) than do their urban counterparts (48.7 percent). Therefore, since the Chi square is not significant, we may not reject the null hypo-

thesis of no relationship, although the relationship is in the predicted direction.

(TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE)

Table 2 depicts the relationship between fundamentalism (coded low and high). Of those respondents scoring low on fundamentalism, (63.3 percent) also score low on prejudice, as opposed to (32.3 percent) of those socring high on fundamentalism. Thirty-seven percent of those scoring low on fundamentalism, scored high on prejudice in contrast to sixty-eight percent of those scoring high on both scales. Furthermore, it may be observed from Table 2, that fundamentalism is positively related to prejudice (.57) and that the relationship is statistically significant ($p < .01$).

(TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE)

Table 3 indicates the relationship between age (coded less than 40 years old, and 40 years old and older) and prejudice (coded low and high). Of the younger ministers, (48.1 percent) scored low on the prejudice scale as opposed to only (34.6 percent) of the older ministers. Fifty-two percent of the younger ministers scored high on prejudice while 65.4 percent of the older ministers scored high on the prejudice scale. There is a slight positive relationship (.27) between age and prejudice. However, the relationship is not statistically significant ($p > .05$) and we may not reject the null hypothesis of any relationship, even though it is in the predicted direction.

Table 4 shows the relationship between Professional Education (coded non-seminary and seminary) and prejudice (coded low and high). Of those

ministers without a seminary education only (17.4 percent) scored low on prejudice as opposed to (59.6 percent) of those with a seminary education. Of those ministers without a seminary education (82.6 percent) scored high on prejudice while only (forty percent) of those with a seminary education scored high on prejudice. From the table it may be noted that there is a strong negative relationship (-.75) between professional education and prejudice. This is the highest level of association reached by any of the independent variables in predicting prejudice. This relationship is also statistically significant with a probability of ($p < .001$). Two of our independent variables are found to have strong statistically significant relationships (fundamentalism and professional education). These are our best predictors of prejudice. However, we believe that professional education is by far the best predictor of prejudice. Also, we feel that it is a strong predictor of fundamentalism.

(TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE)

Table 5 shows the relationship between professional education (coded non-seminary and seminary) and fundamentalism (coded low and high). Of those ministers without a seminary education (10.9 percent) scored low on fundamentalism as opposed to (48 percent) of those who had a seminary education. Eighty-nine percent of those without a seminary education scored high on fundamentalism as opposed to (52 percent) of those with a seminary education. There is a strong negative relationship (-.77) between professional education and fundamentalism and prejudice is due to the influence of professional education and that professional education is clearly the best predictor toward Blacks among ministers.

(TABLE 5 ABOUT HERE)

CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this research provide additional information about religion and prejudice in that our data show that education (seminary vs. non-seminary) is the best predictor of prejudice. The next best predictor of prejudice is fundamentalism (high vs. low), which is followed in order by residence (rural vs. urban) and age (young vs. old).

Our data seem to support the findings of Feagin (1965) in that the more fundamentalistic a person is the more likely that it is that he will hold prejudicial views toward Blacks. However, we must again assert the strong negative relationship found between the clergymen's education and his fundamentalism score, which indicates that as the clergyman's educational level increases, his fundamentalism score decreases. Further, the data appear to add credence to Glock and Stark's (1965) study which indicates that the clergy tend to support the social objectives of the church despite the reactions of their congregations.

The results of this study suggest that further research into the area of the relationship between the theological seminary and clergy attitudes toward social involvement is needed. Our findings appear to support the idea that seminary-trained clergy are more likely to identify with the social philosophy of the churches, than are those ministers without seminary training. Also, the results of this study suggest that the relationship between the clergy and the laity should be explored to include an analysis of the conflict between the clergy and laity over various social issues. Such research may show that the seminary-trained minister serves as a catalyst

for social change within his congregations, and that the conflict arising from the changes cause ideological splits within the minister's church. In addition, a study of the impact of seminary training upon the clergy may show that those ministers receiving seminary training identify more with the profession than non-seminary ministers who may identify more with their congregation.

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TABLE 1. Prejudicial Attitudes of Ministers by Area of Residency

		RESIDENCY		
		Rural	Urban	Total
PREJUDICE	Low	36.1 (22)	51.3 (20)	42 (42)
	High	63.9 (39)	48.7 (19)	58 (58)
	TOTAL	100 (61)	100 (39)	100 (100)

Missing number of observations = 18

Chi square = 1.68, df = 1, $p > .05$

Yule's Q = -.30

TABLE 2. The Relationship Between Fundamentalism and Prejudicial Attitudes of Ministers

		FUNDAMENTALISM Low	High	Total
PREJUDICE	Low	63.3 (19)	32.3 (21)	42.1 (40)
	High	36.7 (11)	67.7 (44)	57.9 (55)
	TOTAL	100 (30)	100 (65)	100 (95)

Missing number of observations = 23

Chi square = 6.88, df = 1, $p < .01$

Yule's Q = .56

TABLE 3. The Relationship Between Prejudicial Attitudes of Ministers By Age

		AGE		
		Young	Old	Total
Prejudice	Low	48.1 (25)	34.6 (18)	41.3 (43)
	High	51.9 (27)	65.4 (34)	58.7 (61)
	TOTAL	100 (52)	100 (52)	100 (104)

Missing observations = 14

Chi square = 1.43, df = 1, $p > .05$

Yule's Q = .27

TABLE 4. Prejudicial Attitudes of Ministers By Type of Educational Training

		EDUCATION		
		Non-seminary	Seminary	Total
Prejudice	Low	17.4 (8)	59.6 (31)	39.8 (39)
	High	82.6 (38)	40.4 (21)	60.2 (59)
	TOTAL	100 (46)	100 (52)	100 (98)

Missing observation = 20

Chi square = 16.44, df = 1, $p < .001$

Yule's Q = -.75

TABLE 5. The Relationship Fundamentalism and Ministers Educational Training

		FUNDAMENTALISM		
		Low	High	Total
Education	Non-seminary	10.9 (5)	89.1 (41)	47.9 (46)
	Seminary	48.0 (24)	52.0 (26)	52.1 (50)
	TOTAL	30.2 (29)	69.8 (67)	100 (96)

Missing observations = 22

Chi square = 13.96, df = 1, $p < .001$

Yule's Q = -.77